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AUTHOR Barber, Lucie W.
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of the amount of time preschool children spend in preschool programs on the development of their self-concept. The preschool-aged subjects were from three groups: (1) 46 children with no preschool experience, but whose parents were "highly motivated to provide for their welfare;" (2) 177 children attending private nursery schools 2 1/2-4 hours a day, either 2, 3, or 5 days a week; and (3) 48 children attending day care centers for 8 or 9 hours a day, 5 days a week. Data were collected on 11 demographic variables of the subjects: age, sex, number of children in the family, family income, age of mother, education of mother, occupation of mother, age of father, education of father, occupation of father and number of parents in the home. A comparative analysis of these variables showed that the socioeconomic level of the "day care" group was lower than that of the "no school" group and the "private group." Subjects' self-concept was measured by seven Barber Scales of Self-Regard (Preschool). Results indicated that there was no consistent relationship between the demographic variables and the seven self-concept scales and that amount of time in a preschool program did not appear to be related to the development of self-concept in children of this sample. (BRT)

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A COMPARISON OF DAY CARE, NO SCHOOL AND PRIVATE NURSERY SCHOOL SAMPLES ON SELF-CONCEPT

by

Lucie W. Barber

Introduction

Parents, communities, federal and state governmental agencies are all debating the benefits of day care centers. Much of the Head Start and Follow Through evaluations have concentrated on school readiness and subsequent academic success. The socio-emotional factors, while admittedly important, have been more difficult to measure (Walker '73). Self-concept is the socio-emotional construct dealt with in this investigation. The research question addressed can be stated as follows: Is the amount of time preschoolers spend in preschool programs related to the development of their self-concept?

In this preliminary study we have confined ourselves to amount of time rather than quality of programs for two reasons. First, our data do not include information about quality of programs. Second, it would appear that amount of time is a basic issue in need of investigation. Data were available from three samples of children:

1. Children in no preschool program.
2. Children in private nursery schools from 2-1/2 to 4 hours a day, either 2 or 3 or 5 days a week.
3. Children in day care centers 8 or 9 hours a day 5 days a week.

These samples will be described in detail in order to demonstrate the large differences between these three groups of children and their

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family environments. The sample description will be followed by an explanation of the instrumentation for measuring self-concept.

Samples

The children in no preschool program, hereafter called the "no school" group, came from families affiliated with the Union College Character Research Project through use of its curriculum for attitude education. While these children had no school experience, they did come from families highly motivated to provide for their welfare. There were 46 children in this group and they lived in locations scattered across the United States.

The 177 children in private nursery schools, scattered across the country, attended one of 13 Episcopal preschool programs or one co-operative nursery school non-church related. This group will be called the "private" group.

The 48 day care children came from one of three day care centers. These centers are located in New York, Illinois and Colorado.

Data were collected on 11 demographic variables. The California Biomedical Program BMDO2S for Contingency Table Analysis was used to compare the three samples. Chi squares for all 11 variables were statistically significant thus confirming differences between samples. These large differences are demonstrated in the following tables which give frequencies and row percentages. The rationale for the ordering Day Care, No School, Private will become apparent upon inspection of the tables. Most variables increase or decrease in that order.

Tables 1 - 11. Description of Day Care, No School and Private Samples on Eleven Demographic Variables by Frequency and Row Percentages

1. Chronological Age of Child

	2 Yr.	3 Yr.	4 Yr.	5 Yr.	Total
A. Day Care					
Frequency	0	10	23	15	48
% Total	0	20.8	47.9	31.3	
B. No School					
Frequency	13	18	11	3	46
% Total	28.3	39.1	23.9	6.5	
C. Private					
Frequency	1	33	73	70	177
% Total	.6	18.6	41.2	39.5	

2. Sex of Child

	Male	Female	Total
A. Day Care			
Frequency	28	20	48
% Total	58.3	41.7	
B. No School			
Frequency	29	17	46
% Total	63	37	
C. Private			
Frequency	92	85	177
% Total	52	48	

3. Number of Children in Family

	This child only	2	3	4 or More	Total
A. Day Care					
Frequency	22	15	7	4	48
% Total	45.8	31.3	14.6	8.3	
B. No School					
Frequency	14	24	8	0	46
% Total	30.4	52.2	17.4	0	
C. Private					
Frequency	37	88	37	14	177
% Total	20.9	49.7	20.9	7.9	

4. Family Income

	No Check	Below $10,000	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000-$19,999	$20,000 or more	Total
A. Day Care						
Frequency	2	26	5	9	6	48
% Total	4.2	54.2	10.4	18.8	12.5	
B. No School						
Frequency	3	3	15	16	9	46
% Total	6.5	6.5	32.6	34.8	19.6	
C. Private						
Frequency	3	70	45	30	29	177
% Total	1.7	4.0	25.4	16.9	52.0	

5. Chronological Age of Mother

	No Ck.	-20 Yr.	20-29 Yr.	30-39 Yr.	40-49 Yr.	50 or Older	Total
A. Day Care							
Frequency	0	0	31	14	3	0	48
% Total	0	0	64.6	29.2	6.3	0	
B. No School							
Frequency	0	0	25	21	0	0	46
% Total	0	0	54.3	45.7	0	0	
C. Private							
Frequency	1	0	50	118	8	0	177
% Total	.6	0	28.2	66.7	4.5	0	

6. Education of Mother

	No Ck	High School	Voc.	College	Pro.	Total
A. Day Care						
Frequency	0	23	6	17	2	48
% Total	0	47.9	12.5	35.4	4.2	
B. No School						
Frequency	0	4	1	30	11	46
% Total	0	8.7	2.2	65.2	23.9	
C. Private						
Frequency	1	23	3	123	27	177
% Total	.6	13.0	1.7	69.5	15.3	

7. Mother's Work

	Doesn't	Part	Full	Total
A. Day Care				
Frequency	6	9	33	48
% Total	12.5	18.8	68.8	
B. No School				
Frequency	36	7	3	46
% Total	78.3	15.2	6.5	
C. Private				
Frequency	136	29	12	177
% Total	76.8	16.4	6.8	

8. Chronological Age of Father

	No Ck.	-20 Yr.	20-29 Yr.	30-39 Yr.	40-49 Yr.	50 or Older	Total
A. Day Care							
Frequency	9	0	23	15	0	1	48
% Total	18.8	0	47.9	31.3	0	2.1	
B. No School							
Frequency	1	0	15	29	1	0	46
% Total	2.2	0	32.6	63.0	2.2	0	
C. Private							
Frequency	1	0	34	115	24	3	177
% Total	.6	0	19.2	65.0	13.6	1.7	

9. Education of Father

	No Ck.	High School	Voc.	College	Pro.	Total
A. Day Care						
Frequency	8	17	4	12	7	48
% Total	16.7	35.4	8.3	25.0	14.6	
B. No School						
Frequency	1	0	2	35	8	46
% Total	2.2	0	4.3	76.1	17.4	
C. Private						
Frequency	2	10	4	114	47	177
% Total	1.1	5.6	2.3	64.4	26.6	

10. Father's Work

	Doesn't	Part	Full	Total
A. Day Care				
Frequency	14	1	33	48
% Total	29.2	2.1	68.8	
B. No School				
Frequency	2	1	43	46
% Total	4.3	2.2	93.5	
C. Private				
Frequency	5	3	169	177
% Total	2.8	1.7	95.5	

11. Number of Parents in Home

	1 Parent	2 Parents	Total
A. Day Care			
Frequency	16	32	48
% Total	33.3	66.7	
B. No School			
Frequency	1	45	46
% Total	2.2	97.8	
C. Private			
Frequency	2	175	177
% Total	1.1	98.9	

If one assumes that income, parents' ages, education and work, and number of parents in the home are indicators of socio-economic status, these results demonstrate that the SES level of the Day Care group is noticeably lower than for the other two groups. The SES level of the Private group is somewhat higher than for the No School group. Can self-concept be adequately measured in such differing samples?

Instrumentation

The seven Barber Scales of Self-Regard (Preschool) were used to measure developmental level of self-regard (self-concept). Self-regard is treated as a complex construct with 7 identifiable and measurable components, thus 7 scales. (Barber '75) On each scale a mother rated her child as belonging to one of 5 developmental levels. Reliability of the scales was supported by interjudge (mother-teacher) correlation coefficients in the high .90's. These estimates of reliability come from the three day care centers (Barber '76). All ratings were made in the second half of the school year.

Analysis

The California Biomedical Program, BMDO3D, Correlation with Item Deletion was used to create a 21 x 21 matrix. The first three variables were different orderings of the three samples. The next seven variables were ratings on the seven Self-Regard Scales. The remaining variables were the demographic variables. Two sets of coefficients were studied: (1) the orderings of the groups with the ratings on the scales, and (2) the ratings on the scales with the demographic variables. Wherever statistically significant coefficients were found ($p \leq .05$), Age of Child was partialed out by means of the formula in Hays Statistics for Psychologists

(1963). The partialing out of Age was deemed advisable for two reasons: In two field tests(and in the present study) a rather strong relationship between age and each of the seven scales has been consistently found. Also, the ages of the children in the three samples are not at all comparable.

Results and Discussion

Table 12 displays the correlation coefficients for the seven scales with three possible orderings of group samples.

Table 12. Product Moment Correlation Coefficients with Age Partialed Out Between Scale Ratings and Orderings of Samples

Self-Regard Scales	Attend A 1. No School 2. Private 3. Day Care	Attend B 1. Day Care 2. No School 3. Private	Attend C 1. No School 2. Day Care 3. Private
Purposeful Learning of Skills	.0672	.0393	.1017
Completing Tasks	.0095	.1314*	.1044
Coping with Fears	-.0421	.0806	.0476
Children's Response to Requests	.0282	.0608	.0678
Dealing with Frustrations	.0352	.0257	.0472
Socially Acceptable Behavior	-.0684	-.0655	-.0007
Developing Imagination in Play	-.0718	.1809***	.1297**

* $p \leq .06$
** $p \leq .05$
*** $p \leq .01$

"Attend A" represents an ordering based on amount of time spent by children in a preschool program. The ordering goes from least to most. All coefficients are zero order indicating that amount of time is not related to developing self-concept as measured by the seven Self-Regard Scales. "Attend B" represents an ordering based on SES, from lowest level to highest level. Levels do not appear to be differentiated for 5 of the scales. Studying "Attend B" in conjunction with "Attend C"* it appears that children in Private programs have some advantage in "Completing Tasks" and "Developing Imagination in Play." It is possible that Day Care students have a small advantage in "Purposeful Learning of Skills" when all three orderings are considered. However, this is highly speculative.

If SES level is related to "Completing Tasks" and "Developing Imagination in Play," as the data indicate, one might ask if any of the demographic variables are related to scale ratings for the total sample. Age, as already reported, relates to every scale. Only four other relationships, $p \leq .05$, were found with the remaining ten variables. Table 13 displays these results.

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* "Attend C" ordering is the third possible ordering. No rationale is apparent for this ordering. It is included for the purpose of displaying all six logical combinations. The ordering of Attend A, B and C can be reversed by changing positive and negative signs of coefficients.

Table 13. Statistically Significant Correlation Coefficients Found Between Scale Ratings and Demographic Variables

Self-Regard Scales	Age of Child	Number of Children in Family	Age of Mother	Work of Father
Purposeful Learning of Skills	.5659**	.2257**	.1482*	
Completing Tasks	.4300**			
Coping with Fears	.4679**	.1968**		
Children's Response to Requests	.3789**			.1356*
Dealing with Frustrations	.5212**			
Socially Acceptable Behavior	.4242**			
Developing Imagination in Play	.5074**			

** $p \leq .01$

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
Age partialed out

There does not appear to be any consistent relationship between the demographic variables and the seven Self-Regard Scales and particularly not with the SES variables. The seven scales together measure a complex construct, Self-Concept, and do not appear to influence or be influenced by SES.

In conclusion, amount of time in a preschool program does not appear to be related to the development of children's self-concept, at least in the children in this total sample. On the other hand, SES does appear to relate to two of the seven components of self-concept, although

minimally. When one considers the large differences among the three groups, it is interesting that the Day Care children fare so well in developmental level of self-concept.

Since the Self-Regard Scales themselves do not appear related to SES level, and since the SES ordering of the samples is related to ratings on two Scales of Self-Regard, the argument can be advanced that something in the Day Care sample is compensating for the SES advantages of the Private and No School groups, at least with two of the Self-Regard Scales, if not with all seven. That something may well be amount of time. The correlation coefficients for the amount of time ordering ("Attend A" in Table 12) were all zero order. Without 8 or 9 hours a day in Day Care, these lower SES level children might actually be rated far lower on the Self-Regard Scales.

Further research is indicated on the relation between the amount of time spent in a preschool program and the level of SES in the development of self-concept. The question of the quality of a preschool program has not been addressed in this investigation. Further research is indicated to investigate not only the amount of time but, also, the quality of program in the development of self-concept.

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